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FYS 10403

Special Topics in Gender Studies: Gendering the Body

Current scholarship in Gender Studies distinguishes between sex, gender, and sexuality as discrete categories. Following the lead of theorists such as Judith Butler or Judith Lorber, we can use concepts like “performativity” or “the social construction of gender/sex/sexuality” to frame our inquiries into these interrelated concepts. We will think about how cultural difference might become or be mirrored by bodily difference, primarily through interrogation of intersex conditions. In this inquiry, we will use a novel (Kathleen Winter’s *Annabel*) as our main case study, supplementing with contemporary real life examples, such as Caster Semenya. Throughout our study, we will pay particular attention to the ways that scholars attend to and honor the inherent dignity of the human body.

Because it is intimately shaped by the field of gender studies, this course will explore issues related to concepts of femininity, masculinity, heterosexuality, homosexuality, sexuality, intersex conditions, identity, and more. Students will consider the ways in which gender identities and roles are produced and performed, and the ways that ideology and representation shape our understanding of gender.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will read texts from a variety of disciplines (including literature, sociology, and biology) to unpack the ways that “gender” is constructed socially;
- Students will apply principles of Gender Studies to the analysis of cultural artifacts/texts for their representation of gender issues;
- Students will develop familiarity with a range of gendered approaches and a deeper expertise with selected theorists;
- Students will acquire the ability to apply the theorists’ work to texts and contemporary issues.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore, eds. *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2011.

Kathleen Winter, *Annabel*. New York: Grove/Atlantic Press, 2011.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- 45%—3 Reflection papers (2-3 pages each) – details to be provided the week before each due date
- 25%—Quizzes
- 30%—Final exam

CLASS ETIQUETTE:

In developing the following policies and expectations, I was primarily guided by an understanding of our purposes in gathering twice a week, which I see as 1) developing your Gender Studies skills, and 2) preparing you as future professionals; they are intended to facilitate both objectives and demonstrate your commitment to this course.

- We are all mutually responsible for maintaining a respectful, safe, appropriate learning environment. Actions or comments which detract from this goal will not be tolerated.
- **Plagiarism cannot be tolerated. Please be mindful of the Honor Code pledge – “As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.” – I will ask you to sign it on your major assignments, which must be done on your own, with any ideas of scholars properly cited (Please use MLA style, UNLESS you have made prior arrangements with me). You may discuss the readings with classmates both before and after class meetings, and obviously should take notes during class discussions.**
- Attendance – any absence not covered by the University’s policy on excused absences is considered unexcused. My policy for attendance is as follows: for every absence after your FIRST unexcused absence, you will lose a THIRD of a letter grade; if you miss more than THREE classes (unexcused), you will FAIL the class.
 - If you will be absent, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING OUT **FROM A CLASSMATE** WHAT YOU HAVE MISSED. If, after consulting a classmate, you still have questions, please see me during office hours.
- Additionally, ABSENCE IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO NOT TURN IN WORK ON TIME. Assignments must be submitted by the indicated due date. Late assignments will only be accepted if arrangements are made prior to the due date and may be assessed a letter grade penalty.
- Any discussion of grade(s) must occur during office hours.
- Email – Please use a subject line that indicates your content. Also, please compose the email in a professional manner (i.e., include both a greeting and a closing, as well as your name).

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- I will use the ND listserv and the Concourse site to communicate with you; please be sure to check both your ND email and Concourse on a regular basis (at least once in between each class session).
- Within the classroom, I expect that laptops will be used as a learning tool, not as a distraction.
- I expect that class will not be interrupted by cell phones or text messages. While I will not embarrass you if this happens, please be aware that I will notice it and your grade will be affected.

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You can expect the following:

- My primary commitment is to your learning: please see me, at any point in the semester, if you have questions or concerns.
- I will be available in 325 O'Shaughnessy Hall during my posted office hours, barring an emergency (in which case, I will post a notice);
- I will answer emails within 24 hours during the week (and typically, I will answer several times a day); on the weekends, I check once on Saturdays, and occasionally on Sundays;
- Assignments will be returned within two class sessions (from the due date).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

- This syllabus can be modified to meet the needs (as determined by me) of the class.
- Readings and assignments are due the class day on which they are listed.

The standard rule of thumb in academia is that you should spend approximately 2 hours of prep time for each hour of class time (for our class, this translates into spending about 2.5 hours before each of our class meetings). If you find that you are spending significantly more time than this on a routine basis, please see me if you would like to brainstorm some reading/writing/studying strategies.

Week 1: Theories of the Gendered Body

3/22

- Introduction

3/24

- *Annabel*, Prologue, chapters 1-5
- Fausto-Sterling, chapter 4 “Should There Be Only Two Sexes?” (ignore the pages of charts)

Week 2: Procreation

3/29

- Lorber & Moore, chapter 1 “Neither Nature Nor Nurture” (focus on the summaries)
- Fausto-Sterling, chapter 1 “Dueling Dualisms” (focus on pages 1-20)
- Lorber & Moore, chapter 2 “‘Are You My Mother? My Father?’” (focus on the summaries)

3/31

- *Annabel*, chapters 6-8
- QUIZ #1

Week 3: the Female Body

4/5

- Lorber & Moore, chapter 3 “Eve, Venus, and ‘Real Women’”
- Reflection #1 due

4/7

- *Annabel*, chapters 9-11

Week 4: **the Male Body**

4/12

- Lorber & Moore, chapter 4 “Adonis, Don Juan, and ‘Real Men’”
- QUIZ #2

4/14

- *Annabel*, chapters 12-16

Week 5: **the Intersex Body**

4/19

- *Annabel*, chapters 17-20

4/21

- Fausto-Sterling, chapter 3 “Of Gender and Genitals” (focus on pages 45-54, 66-77)
- Optional: Fausto-Sterling, chapter 2 “That Sexe Which Prevaileth”
- Reflection #2 due

4/22-4/25: Easter

Week 6: **the Transgender Body**

4/26

- *Annabel*, chapters 21-28
- Lucal, Betsy. 1999. “What it Means to be Gendered Me: Life on the Boundaries of a Dichotomous Gender System.” *Gender and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (Dec., 1999), pp. 781-797 (to be provided)

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4/28 – need to select an alternate time

- Lorber & Moore, chapter 5 “Aligning Bodies, Identities, and Expressions”
- Fausto-Sterling, chapter 9 “Gender Systems” (focus on pages 243-55)
- QUIZ #3

Week 7: **Conclusion**

5/3

- *Annabel*, chapters 29-34, Epilogue
- Lorber & Moore, Conclusion “Social Bodies in an Interconnected World”
- Reflection #3 due

Final Exam – date/time TBD as per the University schedule